

Serial No. 09/911,996

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a base body in which at least one plug contact is arranged, the at least one plug contact permitting an insertion of an electric feed line into the plug contact in an axial direction from a rear end of the at least one plug contact, and

P3
a fitting part comprising a side wall, the side wall having at least one expandable area to which a latch element is connected, wherein the fitting part is coupled to the base body by means of the latch element.

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated December 4, 2002. By way of this amendment, claims 10-18 have been cancelled, and claims 1, 3 and 6-9 have been amended. Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attached paper is captioned "VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE." Claims 1-9 are currently pending in the application. Applicant hereby requests further examination and reconsideration in view of the following remarks.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-9 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Doyle et al. This ground of rejection is respectfully traversed in light of the present amendment.

Independent claim 1 recites a plug-and-socket connector element comprising a base body, having at least one plug contact, and a fitting part movable with respect to the base body between a first latching position and a second latching position. When in the first latching position, the fitting part permits lateral access to the at least one plug contact. When in the second latching position, the fitting part laterally covers the plug contact. Independent claim 8 similarly recites a plug-and-socket connector element comprising a base body supporting one or more plug contacts and a fitting part movable with

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respect to the base body in a reversible manner from a first latching position to a second latching position. When in the first latching position, the fitting part permits a lateral access to each plug contact. When in the second latching position, the fitting part covers each plug contact.

Independent claim 9 recites a plug-and-socket connector element comprising a base body, having at least one plug contact, and a fitting part. The fitting part comprises a side wall having at least one expandable area to which a latch element is connected. The fitting part is coupled to the base body by means of the latch element.

Doyle et al discloses an electrical connector comprising a connector body 12, a connector housing 14 and a collar 16. The connector body 12 is made up of connecting member 12a and coupling member 12b, which are fastened together by means of threaded fasteners, cementing compound or the like. Coupling member 12b includes a number of fastening projections 20 received in recesses 24 formed in connecting member 12a. Boreholes 26 are provided for accommodating threaded fasteners 22. Connecting member 12a also includes contacting means 42 for receiving wires 18.

The electrical connector of Doyle et al further includes at least two spring clip members 28 for securing connector body 12 within connector housing 14. The clip members 28 are mounted at one end to body 12 and have fastening means 30 formed on the free ends thereof that engage receiving means 32 formed in housing 14 to secure body 12 and housing 14 together. As seen in Figure 1c of Doyle et al, fastening means 30 only engage the receiving means 32 when body 12 is fully inserted into housing 14.

Applicant respectfully submits that Doyle et al fails to anticipate independent claims 1 and 8 as amended. Namely, Doyle et al fails to disclose a fitting part that is movable with respect to a base body between a first and second latching positions as required by both claims 1 and 8. The Examiner

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argues that the "base body 12a" and the "fitting part (12b, 14, 16)" of Doyle et al are relative movable between first and second position. The first position is said to be when elements 30 and 14 touch; the second position is said to be when elements 30 and "adjacent 40" (presumably receiving means 32) interlock. It is respectfully submitting that the first position, as defined by the Examiner, is not a latching position. In this first position, the fastening means 30 merely touch the connector housing 14 and in no way latch the connector body 12 to the connector housing 14. The connector body 12 is only latched with respect to the connector housing 14 when it is fully inserted therein so that the fastening means 30 engage the receiving means 32. This is what the Examiner has described as the second position.

Accordingly, Doyle et al only discloses one latching position, not two such positions as required by claims 1 and 8. For this reason, it is respectfully submitted that Doyle et al does not anticipate claims 1 and 8. Claims 2-7 depend from independent claim 1 and are thus believed to be allowable for the reasons set forth above. Furthermore, at least some of these dependent claims set forth limitations not met by the prior art. For instance, claim 3 recites that the fitting part comprises an axial extension that cooperates with a plug contact in the base body. The Examiner contends that the fastening projections 20 of Doyle et al correspond to the claimed extension. However, the fastening projections 20 are formed on the coupling member 12b, which cannot be considered to be part of the fitting member because it does not move relative to the connecting member 12a. Claim 3 recites that the extensions are part of the *fitting member*.

With respect to independent claim 9, Doyle et al fails to disclose a fitting part having a side wall with at least one expandable area to which a latch element is connected. Accordingly, Doyle et al does not anticipate claim 9.

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The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7-9 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Laudig et al. This ground of rejection is respectfully traversed in light of the present amendment.

Laudig et al discloses a connector 1 for a coaxial cable 2. The connector includes a conductive shell 7, which receives cable 2 through cable holder 15 and an electrical contact 16 through contact holder 14. A cover 51 is attached to the shell 7. The Examiner contends that the shell 7 corresponds to the claimed base body and the cover 51 corresponds to the claimed fitting part. However, the cover 51 is not movable with respect to the shell 7 between first and second latching positions as required by both claims 1 and 8. The cover 51 is latched with respect to the shell 7 in only one, not two, positions. Thus, Laudig et al does not anticipate claims 1 and 8. Claims 2, 4 and depend from independent claim 1 and are thus believed to be allowable for the reasons set forth above.

Laudig et al also fails to disclose a fitting part having a side wall with at least one expandable area to which a latch element is connected as required by independent claim 9. The cover 51, which the Examiner asserts corresponds to the claimed fitting part, is described as being made of a strip of metal; although the cover 51 is described as resiliently deflecting (column 4, line 24), there is no description of the cover having an expandable area in a side wall. Accordingly, Laudig et al does not anticipate claim 9.

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In view of the above, it is submitted that the claims are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the objections and rejections is requested. Allowance of claims 1-9 at an early date is solicited.

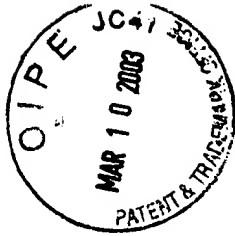
Respectfully submitted,

3/4/03

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1, 3 and 6-9 have been amended as follows:

Claim 1 (once amended). A plug-and-socket connector element comprising:

a base body in which at least one plug contact is arranged, the at least one plug contact permitting an insertion of an electric feed line in an axial direction from a rear end of the at least one plug contact, and

a fitting part which is movable with respect to the base body from a first latching position to a second latching position and which permits a lateral access at the rear end of the at least one plug contact to the at least one plug contact in the first latching position and, in the second latching position, laterally covers the at least one plug contact.

Claim 3 (once amended). The plug-and-socket connector element according to Claim 1, wherein the fitting part comprises at least one extension which extends in an axial direction, the extension cooperating with the at least one plug contact in such a manner that the extension in the first latching position locks the plug contact against falling out and, in the second latching position, rigidly holds the plug contact in the base body.

Claim 6 (once amended). The plug-and-socket connector element according to Claim 1, wherein the at least one plug contact comprises a clamping screw at the rear end of the at least one plug contact, the clamping screw extending in a radial direction with respect to an axial extension of the plug contact and being accessible in the first latching position of the fitting part.

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Claim 7 (once amended). The plug-and-socket connector element according to Claim 1, wherein the fitting part can be reversibly reciprocated between the first latching position and the second latching position.

Claim 8 (once amended). A plug-and-socket connector element comprising:

a base body supporting one or more plug contacts, and allowing feeding of an electric feed line in an axial direction towards the plug contact; and

a fitting part movable with respect to the base body in a reversible manner from a first latching position to a second latching position, wherein, in the first latching position, the fitting part permits a lateral access to each plug contact for electrically connecting the electric feed line to the respective plug contact and, in the second latching position, the fitting part covers the [at least one] plug contact at least laterally.

Claim 9 (once amended). A plug-and-socket connector element comprising:

a base body in which at least one plug contact is arranged, the at least one plug contact permitting an insertion of an electric feed line into the plug contact in an axial direction from a rear end of the at least one plug contact, and

a fitting part comprising a side wall, the side wall having at least one [expendable] expandable area to which a latch element is connected, wherein the fitting part is coupled to the base body by means of the latch element.